



Retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Leon Cheek and Col. Thomas Ardern, 8th Fighter Wing vice commander, stand atop Big Coyote Sept. 8, looking down on Kunsan. Cheek was stationed here nearly 50 years ago.

Retired Marine re-visits Kunsan after 50 years

*Story and photo by 1st Lt. Miki Kristina Krejcarek
8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs*

A retired U.S. Marine Corps lieutenant colonel visited Kunsan Air Base Sept. 8 to stand on the same ground as he did nearly 50 years ago when he was assigned here.

“It (the base) looks different from the last time I was here,” Lt. Col. Leon Cheek said as he overlooked the base on Big Coyote Hill. “So far, it looks better.”

Cheek, a North Carolina native, flew F-7F Tiger-cats from 1952 to 1953 with the Marine Nightfighter squadron 513 (VMF (N)-513), the Flying Nightmares, that was assigned here to fly night support missions during the Korean War.

Colonel Thomas Ardern, 8th Fighter Wing vice commander, greeted Cheek before departing for a

flightline and windshield tour of the base.

“Tell us what it used to be like and where you used to hang out,” he said.

One of the highlights for Cheek was viewing an F-16 aircraft up close as Ardern explained the speed, gravitational forces and weapons systems of the F-16.

Cheek also toured Gunsmoke Hill where the presently erected commanders’ houses used to be the area where he was quartered. Although on the most part separated from the Air Force in those days, he said, the Marines found ways to work for things that were important for their quality of life.

“It was funny how we bent our backs to work hard to get something that wasn’t that important, but was,” he said.

Within 30 days, the Marines built a mess hall from a garage that Japanese forces used.

“The food was so good we had to place armed guards to keep the Air Force out,” he said.

Although the Air Force and Marine Corps displayed inter-service rivalry, it was all in good humor, said Cheek.

One of the greatest memories of the rivalry, Cheek said, was during the Marine Corps birthday.

He told of making a sword from an aluminum rod and obtaining an ice-cream machine and jam and jelly to make a cake for their service’s birthday.

“I remember my skipper (commander) with the sword. He was leading the charge across the compound in his long handle underwear and shoes, determined to cut down the Air Force flag,” he said. “I can see him doing it now.”

Cheek was active duty Marine Corps for about six years before he joined the Reserves.

Prevention is key when dealing with mold problems

*By 1st Lt. Ben Frankenfield
8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs*

Fighting mold growth at Kunsan is a problem. Walking into dormitory 609, for example, is like stepping into a swamp. The dehumidifiers lining the first floor hallway are in a constant battle to keep moisture out of the air.

Without them, mold would overwhelm the already water-stained ceiling tiles.

Mold is a problem for some airmen living in the dorms here, said Staff Sgt. Robert Esquivel, an 8th Medical Group bioenvironmental technician.

“Our duties, among other things, is to ensure that the indoor air quality in the work place is safe,” said 1st Lt. Robbie Wheeler, 8th MDG bioenvironmental flight deputy chief. “Since the government gives us the dorm rooms, we want to keep people healthy there, too.”

“Most of the mold is garden-variety mold,” said Wheeler. “It’s not a health risk, but we do want to minimize it.

The best thing people can do when they see mold is clean it up.”

Any household cleaner would do, said Esquivel.

But for dorms like 609, mold isn’t the easiest to clean up when it’s above the ceiling tiles. Prevention is the key.

“I live in 609,” said Esquivel. “I have no problems with mold and humidity.”

Esquivel’s no-mold secret is to keep the air in the room circulating and his dehumidifier on full blast while he’s at work.

“I have the fan going in my room all day,” said Esquivel. “It circulates the air, so it’s just not stagnant.”

Esquivel explained that mold is formed in stagnate water.

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bioenvironmental flight
deputy chief**

In the dorm rooms, stagnate water isn’t the leach-filled stream parents warn their children to keep away from. It can be any water droplet that doesn’t evaporate before becoming a home to millions of microscopic plant life injecting spores into the air — mold.

At the root of the problem is dripping water from leaking pipes or condensation, said Esquivel, typically formed from the high humidity touching the cold air-conditioners.

“But being here on the ocean makes it difficult to eliminate mold,” said Wheeler.

The bioenvironmental flight says there are ways to keep mold from becoming a problem.

To reduce condensation, said Wheeler, don’t have the air-conditioner turned all the way down.

Also periodically open the windows and let in fresh air.

The 8th Civil Engineer Squadron keeps buildings in shape should the bioenvironmental flight find a problem or dorm residents have a complaint.

“How we help is provide the needed dehumidifiers,” said Capt. Kyle Brown, 8th CES housing flight chief.

The 8th CES also replaces poor insulation around chilled water pipes and air conditioners to keep condensation from forming.

There is no small fix to some of the problems in a dorm like 609, where the air-conditioning unit doesn’t dry the air, as it should.

“It needs a complete renovation, costing \$3 million,” said Brown.

“Some of the people who live in the worst conditions are those that complain the least,” said Brown. “We do what we can for them.”